

Beginnings (working title)

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Summary: This is set before the pilot: after Julia gets Nick to open up a little, she is kidnapped....

Beginnings (working title)

> <meta name="Author"> Beginnings Ah, again some notes from the insecure writer before you read on: This is only my second attempt at a PTL fanfic, and I'm still nervous about it. I hope the characterization is right, and that what I write about the Nick/Julia relationship is more or less on target. I've sadly never seen the first ep. of PTL, so I dunno if it's right. So, as always, feed back would be greatly appreciated, you guys were kind enough with the first one...

Okay, on with the fanfic:

"Derek, I think he's a danger to himself and the rest of us." Julia Walked said, her eyes locked on her superior.

Derek Rayne immediately knew who 'he' was. Nick Boyle, the newest member of the San Francisco house. Although Nick had only been with them for almost a month, Derek found himself agreeing with Julia.

"How are you sure?" Alex Moreau asked, a little surprised by Julia's judgments.

For the first time since entering the control room, Julia looked a little uncomfortable.

"I see...parallels...He'll wind up getting himself hurt." She didn't have to explain what she meant by parallels, the others in the room understood.

After a reflective silence, Alex nodded. "He is the only person I know that goes for a jog at three in the morning. He's definitely troubled by something..."

"Maybe we'll give him some sort of direction here." Father Philip Callaghan added, honestly believing his words.

"I hope so." Derek said after a silence. "For the time being, let's just keep a close eye on him." Saying it sounded futile, even to the Precepts ears. They had all been watching Julia...

Knowing a change of topics would be well liked, Derek did so. "Philip, is your friend still having problems at his church?"

Philip nodded. "The spirit is still there, over the altar. Joseph is at a loss. I think he could use our help."

Derek nodded his agreement. "Let's see if Nick would like to help out...Why don't you and him visit the church tomorrow, Julia?" Julia nodded her consent, looking a little apprehensive towards working with Nick again. "And Philip, meet them there and introduce them to Father Hale." Looking at Alex, last, he added. "Alex, see what you can dig up about the church."

Seeing that the three were all accepting their assignments, Derek went off to find Nick. He hoped the younger man would agree as well.

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The dreams felt real...terrifying. It was the only time that his guilt and his fears were able to poke through his carefully constructed walls. If any of the others at the house had saw his face then, they would've saw emotions they never saw during the day, hell, they'd be surprised to find that his stoic features were anything but.

He'd wake up, a scream half in his throat, half out of his mouth. For a few seconds all the fear and guilt would stick with him, making his lungs freeze in his chest. Then he'd force all the thoughts and feelings into the back of his mind. He'd be left with nothing but an empty feeling.

Incredibly unhealthy, as far as mental health went, but he couldn't deal with it all yet. A part of him was aware of that, a very small part. The same part that had been able to lie to the psychologist...The Legacy was extra careful as to who they allowed to join. Mental health was something that they were extremely cautious about. Unbalanced people had more to gain from joining the dark side.

Knowing his thoughts would lead him into places he didn't want to go, he tried to

>think of something, anything, else. What they went to almost immediately, was to one of the members of the house, Julia Walker. She had been able to cut through the walls of apathy that he had built, if only for a brief moment, and only through her anger.
<p>

'You've got to get your act together, and soon. Start caring about something or someone is gonna die as a result of your god-damned indifference.' She had told him off, nearly screamed the words at them as she made their way back to the house. He didn't even think he had done anything to warrant her screaming, right then anyway.

All he had done was, in his mind, was being, if anything, too truthful. In retrospect, he realized that telling the crying woman that he was unsure how much of a help they really could be was, in the very least, slightly insensitive. It was her yelling that he would get someone killed that was still on his mind. He tried to force it out of his mind along with all those other thoughts and feelings, but couldn't.

Cursing himself, he stood up, knowing that sleep was over for the night. Looking at the clock, he saw what time it was: three a.m. As good a time as any to take a jog. Less than five minutes later, he was in the hall, moving as quietly as possible.

He heard the movements behind him a second before she spoke. "Going running at three in the morning?" She asked, her voice holding a hint of humor in it.

He spun, surprised to see her in sweats as well. "What are you doing up?" He asked, his voice neutral...sounding dead almost.

"Can't sleep...I see I'm not the only one that tries to cure it with a good run, am I?" She asked, a hint of a smile on her face.

He shrugged.

"Think you can keep up with me?" She asked, full smile on her face this time.

He grinned then. "You should have more trouble keeping up with me." He replied, knowing that she would. Knowing she knew she would as well.

"Is that a challenge?"

He shrugged again.

"Good...Challenges keep you on your toes." Finished speaking, she was pushing past him and almost to the stairs when he followed.

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Knowing what would happen if he stayed close to her, he had quickly out ran her. Her being there was causing more problems than he wanted to think about. She was raising all the feelings he wanted to stay buried, especially love. Love was dangerous. You loved someone and then they hurt you. That was the way it always went, that was the way it would always go.

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So, instead of traveling down dangerous paths, he had opted to run away from her, away from everything. This was a good plan, as long as his body cooperated with him. After a while, it was apparent that his body would quit on him before his mind would.

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Still, he probably would've never stopped running if he hadn't tripped over the fallen log. His mind had been fighting its self, his body moving the way it was accustomed too, he wasn't even paying attention to the path as he ran down it. As a result, he hadn't seen that the path was blocked.

One moment he was running fine, the next, for a brief second, there was nothing under his feet. Then the ground rose to meet him. He was shocked back to the present, surprised to find himself on the ground, even more surprised by the pain that was coming from his left knee. Looking down, he was surprised to see that he had split open the knee of his pants, and that he was bleeding.

Deciding that sitting down was fine, he tried to move into a position that was more comfortable. He finally wound up sitting on the log he had fell over, facing the way he had came.

Julia would be along soon, unless she had given up trying to catch up to him. He supposed that if she had, that would be what he deserved. Something told he that he wouldn't have given up though.

As if to prove his thoughts true, Julia came up the path then. He could barely see her from as far away as she was, but it was her all the same. And she was still running, at a steady pace, until she saw that he was sitting, then she slowed to a walk.

"Are you okay?" She asked, when she was less then ten feet away.

"I tripped." He offered, his right hand clamped over his knee, trying to stop the bleeding.

"You should watch where you're going." Julia said, sitting next to him.

"Advise that would've helped about five minutes ago." He shot back before he could stop himself.

"How much longer are you gonna do this to yourself?" She asked after a second of silence.

"Do what?" He asked, unable to look at her. He knew exactly what she meant. Playing stupid was something he never liked doing, but he knew what would happen if she kept up with where she was going. He didn't want that...

"Keep pushing everything out of your mind so you walk around like a zombie."

He blinked, surprised that she had known exactly what he was doing. He stayed silent, his eyes locked on his knee which was still bleeding. He wasn't paying attention to that anymore, he was fighting everything back.

"I tried it you know...I nearly got myself killed."

He looked up then, surprised. It felt like his throat had closed up, he couldn't speak.

"Whatever you're hiding from, it's not worth what you're putting your mind or your body through." She continued.

"It is." His voice was rough, no longer dead sounding. For the first time since the jungle there was emotion behind it.

"I doubt it...Nothing is worth going through life pushing away all feelings to avoid the few bad ones."

"I've never had any of the good ones." He forced out, he could feel his throat closing again, this time out of fear. He was afraid to let loose the emotions he had blocked up for so long.

"I don't believe that."

He sighed and concentrated on looking at anything but her. "They never stay good for long."

She put her hand on his shoulder, making him feel uncomfortable and grateful at the same time. Even his own mother hadn't tried to comfort him after he left the SEALs.

"But if you keep doing what you're doing, you'll never find out if they could stay good."

"Doesn't happen like that...Everyone I've ever loved, or cared about, has left me." There he said it.

"Who?"

A simple question, but he was sure she didn't know what she was really asking him to say. For the first time since the events in the jungle, he felt the tears welling up in his eyes. He blinked, trying hard not to cry. God, he didn't want to cry...He was so tired of crying about everyone.

"My brother..." He started, but that was as far as he got. Underneath and the anger and resentment he had held for his brother, there was understanding and pain. He hated Jimmy for leaving him, he did, but he understood. But it still hurt that his older brother, the one who was supposed to protect him from everything, left him with a monster. So instead of screaming in anger, tears came. Surprising even himself.

"Did your brother leave you?" Julia pressed. He hated her, he really did. She was
>making him go through things he didn't want to. He loved her for it too. <p>

"Yeah." Was all he could get out. He was angry with himself. After all that had happened in the years since Jimmy left, he was crying about that. Part of him knew that it wasn't just Jimmy he was crying about...

"Why'd he leave?"

Nick thought about lying, but didn't. Words came, and he couldn't stop them. He told her everything, about his father, how he treated them, how he hurt them all...How Jimmy had left, saying that it was too much. When the words finally stopped, they sat in silence, Julia's arm around his shoulders.

He was in shock. He had never told anyone about his father, not even his best friends in high school. But Julia's simple question had brought it all out. Again, he was grateful and angry at the same time.

"You've been like this since you were a kid?" Julia asked, breaking the silence. He knew what 'like this' meant.

He shook his head.

"What pushed you over the edge?"

Again, what seemed like a simple question wasn't. The scars from what had happened in the jungle were still too fresh, he didn't want to open them yet. At the same time, he knew he'd have to...

"Nick?" She pressed, trying to break his silence.

The words came, like they did before, except this time it was without tears. He told her everything, about who the other guys in the unit treated him, that he was on point, he was supposed to die first, not be the only survivor. He even told her how Richter had betrayed them all, and he couldn't trust the ones guarding his back any longer.

"God..." Was all she could say in response when he was done. "You feel guilty about it all, don't you?"

"Yeah...My job was to make sure nothing bad was heading our way. And I guess I believe that I should've known it was coming, should've sensed the trap somehow..." He trailed off, having difficulty putting his feelings into words.

"It's your fault you lived?" She asked, her tone telling him she thought the opposite.

He shrugged, unable to answer her. Hearing her say it pointed out the absurdity of it, but didn't help him stop thinking it...

"Is that what you keep having nightmares about?" She asked suddenly, breaking the silence that had fallen over them.

Again, he was amazed by her powers of perception. "I didn't wake anyone up, did I?" He asked.

She shook her head. "No, I could just tell...Anyone who goes running at three in the morning every night is obviously having trouble sleeping...and I've been there...Working here, with the Legacy, you get into situations normal people can't even imagine. And it leaves it's scares sometimes...I guess sometimes what happens won't scar over right away..." She trailed off, and looked away from him.

"What happened?" He forced the words through his throat that still felt like holding everything back.

Now, it was his turn to listen and Julia's turn to pour her heart out. She told him about an assignment that had went beyond bad, and resulted in the deaths of five children, all while she watched, unable to stop it. She said she had at first dealt with the grief and guilt like he had, by pushing everything away. She stayed like that, until on another assignment, her carelessness to her own safety resulted with her in the hospital.

"I guess it woke me up." She finished, looking at him for the first time. "It also woke
>Derek up too...He made me talk to a psychologist -one who was Legacy of course. It took awhile, but it helped. The doctor taught me to focus, and care about what really mattered -keep on helping others through the Legacy." <p>

Again, silence fell. Nick looked at his watch, and was surprised to

find it was close to six in the morning. For the first time, he was aware of how light it had become out as they had talked. A look at Julia told he she was surprised to find the same thing.

"Well, I guess we should get back to the house before Derek wakes up and finds us gone." Julia said, smile on her face.

Nick found himself returning the smile, that was, until he stood up. His injured knee, which he had totally forgotten about during their talking, screamed at him when he put weight on it. He sat back down on the log.

"Oh, right, you're knee." Julia said, wincing.

He stood again, carefully putting all his weight on his right leg. "I suppose that's what I get." He mumbled.

"Hey, cutting open your leg as opposed to winding up in the hospital with two broken ribs, a concussion, and a broken arm...You did a lot better then me." She said, trying to lighten the mood.

He turned to face her, for the first time, he looked into her eyes. "Thank you." He said, then did something that surprised even himself.

He pulled her into a hug.

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"This isn't going to work...you're gonna have to take your pants down."

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Julia's voice drifted out of the kitchen to greet Derek as he made his way there for his first cup of coffee. Not a sentence that one likes to hear without drinking at least one cup first.

"But I hardly know you!" Nick's voice answered.

Derek stopped, pausing outside the door, honestly confused. If someone would've asked him the night before if he ever expected to hear that type of conversation between the two people he was, he answer would've been a definite no. Derek was perfectly aware of Julia's anger towards Nick the previous day. Now, at half past seven in the morning, the two of them were flirting with each other.

"You do have underwear on, right?"

"Yeah. But.."

"Fine, then, cover yourself up!" Julia replied.

"Turn around."

Hearing enough to start his head aching, Derek pushed into the room. What his eyes found was Nick Boyle pulling down a pair of dirty sweat pants, a towel in one hand. The young man jumped, and dropped back down on the seat, draping the towel across his lap. Derek felt eternally grateful to the fact that he was indeed wearing underwear.

"Am I interrupting something?" Derek asked, finding his voice first. If he wasn't mistaken, Julia was holding back a giggle. Nick, to his credit, was blushing.

"We went for a jog and he tripped." Julia offered, the smile still on her face, knowing that it all sounded rather comical.

"Are you all right?" Derek asked almost immediately.

Nick nodded.

"He cut himself, I just wanted to clean it out." Julia supplied again, still fighting giggles.

"Oh, I see." Derek answered, almost absently. He moved over to the coffee machine, glad to see that it was already brewed. He poured himself a cup, then turned around to face the two, watching them silently.

"Will you be okay to visit the church this afternoon?" Derek asked as Julia carefully poured peroxide over the cut.

Nick nodded.

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Well, at least one of them was getting sentence out of him. Derek had all but given up trying to get the young man to open up at all to them. Apparently, Julia had said something to get him to talk to her. That was a start.

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"Joseph, this is Julia Walker, and Nick Boyle...I think they can help out." Philip introduced the two Legacy members to the older priest.

"It's a pleasure to meet the both of you." The Priest said as he shook each of their hands.

Nick had learned to trust his instincts and his judgement of people's character. As he listened to Joseph tell what exactly the problem was, he decided that the priest honestly believed what he had seen to be true. What he had seen was a young woman, surrounded by light and wearing white had appeared to the Father right after the last mass the past Sunday. The woman had told Joseph to leave. Joseph left, '...worried that the spirit wasn't the work of God'. When he had returned to the altar the following day to do the short daily mass, the spirit was again there. This time, there were three witnesses to the sighting. Again, the woman had told him to leave.

"It's disrupting my masses. She won't leave until I do." Joseph finished, looking tired.

Despite the priest's convictions, Nick was doubting the story. Joseph may have believed what he was saying, but that didn't mean it was an actual ghost either. Even after the few times he had listened to his father talk about his work, Nick had trouble believing in the paranormal. He understood that something was wrong in the church, he could almost feel that when he walked in. But the fact remained that it was probably someone, not something, causing the disturbances.

"Let's have a look at the altar, then." Julia suggested, breaking the silence that had
>fallen over the four. <p>

"Oh, yes, of course." Joseph mumbled, leading the way through the hall and into the church itself.

They had entered through a side door, so the first thing Nick saw were the lines of pews, made of oak. Crosses hung around the church, as well as tapestries depicting the crucifixion and other scenes Nick didn't recognize. The ceiling was high above them, allowing for a balcony that housed a second level of pews. In short, it looked like half of the churches in the city.

Only one parishioner sat in the church, though to Nick, the man looked out of place. The tall man had removed his hat, revealing a sunburned scalp. The man's jacket had 'Weird Beard's Bar' airbrushed on the back, with an almost frightening cartoon of the person that was presumably 'weird beard'. When they had entered, the man had looked up, almost surprised to see them.

Though he wasn't sure why, Nick had an increasingly bad feeling about the church. He thought it might just have been a result of the fact that the last time he had been in a church was for the funeral mass of one of his friends in the unit...But still, the hairs on the back of his neck were standing at attention, and dimly he realized that all his muscles were tight. It was like he was expecting something.

The four of them headed towards the alter. When they were ten feet away, a bright light shot up, from the dark wood flooring. A second later, the light was filled by the image of a woman, her hands outstretched, an almost terrified look on her face.

"GET OUT! NOW!" She screamed, though her voice sounded afraid and not threatening. "PLEASE! ALL OF YOU!"

Nick tore his eyes away from her to look around the church, trying to find any signs
>that said the image was being projected. He couldn't find one, which made the bad feeling in his gut strengthen. While he was turning to look back at the woman, a small flash of red light caught his attention. It looked like it was coming from the under side of

the alter itself.

He took a step closer, seeing that the red was indeed there. What he had seen was the glare reflecting off the polished wooden legs of the alter. He moved even closer, ignoring the priest's question of what he was doing. Kneeling down (ignoring the little twinge of pain coming from the cut) so he could get a better look underneath the alter, he was startled at what he saw.

Through his military training, Nick had become familiar with explosives. What he was looking at was enough to create one hell of a blast. It wouldn't level the church, but it would do damage. What had scared him was the numbers on the timer. 0:38 and counting down. Cursing under his breath, he pushed himself to his feet.

"RUN!" He screamed, knowing that they couldn't possibly get out of the building in time. In his head he counted down, making sure that the others were in motion. Philip and Father Joseph headed to the right, while him and Julia ran straight up the middle of the church. Nick watched as the biker, who was closer to the back doors than any of them, threw them open and ran out.

He was halfway to the door when the bomb exploded.
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Alex jumped, startling Derek. The two of them were sitting

in the control room, looking for any previous 'accidents' at the church.

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"Alex, are you all right?" Derek asked.

"I just got the worst feeling, all of a sudden....and then it felt like I was punched in the back."

Worried now, Derek stood and crossed the room to stand next to her desk. "What do you think it was?" Derek was aware of Alex's psychic abilities, and was afraid that the 'feeling' meant more than just a chill.

There was a long pause as Alex thought. "I think they're in trouble, Derek."

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The shock wave of the explosion had thrown him forwards, sending him flying into the pews. He had landed hard, first on his side and second with his head. Somehow, he wound up on the floor, conscious, but barely so.

Taking a few seconds to assess his own injuries, he realized how lucky he was -he could've been a lot worse. Even though the right side of his ribcage was aching, telling him he had definitely injured something there, he was more worried about his head. His ears were ringing, making the pounding of his head hurt even more. With some effort he sat up, aware for the first time that he was bleeding from a gash above his right eye. He shook his head and tried to clear it, though all he succeeded in doing was making the pain worse.

Forcing himself to stand, he looked around the now smoke filled church. Already, it was catching on fire, the tapestries lighting and the hard wood pews catching as well. If not for the high ceiling, the smoke would've been blinding. Instead it just burned his throat, and made his eyes water.

"JULIA!?!...PHILIP!?!...FATHER JOSEPH!?!..." He called, remembering that he wasn't alone.

For a long time there was silence, and then a faint cry from somewhere ahead of him and to his right. He looked around, and saw long dark hair sticking out from underneath a pew that had been overturned and against another. Cursing, he moved there as fast as he could, trying hard to ignore the sounds of the fire.

"Julia?" He asked, dropping to his knees and moving so he could look under the pile of pews. He was immediately worried by the amount of blood on her face.

"Nick?...I'm stuck!" Her voice sounded weak, pained.

"What's stuck?" He asked, leaning in through the opening, trying to see, and not

>make any contact with Julia. He didn't know what she had hurt and didn't want to take any chances with accidentally aggravating an injury. <p>

"My left leg...it's caught between the two."

"Okay, give me a second."

He stood, and inspected the pew, trying to find the best angle to lift from. He was painfully aware of how close the fire was to them. After a few seconds of looking, he found where her leg was trapped, glad to see that there wasn't any blood. Still streaming a litany of curses in his mind, he went back to kneel next to the opening.

"When I lift it, you have to slide yourself out, okay?"

"Okay..." He could tell from her voice that she didn't sound sure of herself.

That would have to be good enough. Standing once again, he moved to where it looked like the pew was resting against the back of the other. Getting the best grip he could, while studying the fire's progress, he knew they'd probably only have one shot to do this the easy way.

"Ready?...On three.....One...Two...Three!" He pushed and lifted at the same time, amazed at the weight of the long bench. Pain shoot through his side, but he ignored it and concentrated on not dropping it. It felt like it took an eternity for Julia to get out. When she did, she told him, screaming it. With a final grunt, he let go, narrowly missing catching his own fingers between the two.

Breathing heavily, he crouched next to her where she sat on the floor, her right hand pressed against her leg. "I don't think I can walk, Nick." She said, not taking her eyes off her leg.

"I can carry you." He answered almost immediately, wrapping his arms around her and pulling her up. The muscles in his chest and arms protested against the work, making him aware that he had already overworked them.

Silently, he hurried out of the church and down the cement steps. The air outside was cool compared to the heat inside the burning building. It felt good to his aching throat and chest. Gently, he sat Julia down on the grass, trying hard not to aggravate her injury.

"Where's Philip?" Julia asked, looking wildly around them.

Nick stood, and looked towards the building, amazed to see the smoke billowing out the doors in waves. "I'm gonna go look for him." He said, taking a final sweep of the street to see if the two priests were along the road. The only one he saw was the biker that had been in the church.

"I called 911!" The biker screamed across the street after seeing Nick's eyes settle on him.

"I'll be back out." Nick assured Julia before running back up the steps.

Inside, he screamed Philip's name, trying to navigate the other turned pews without being burned by the fire that was now raging. He hardly heard Philip calling back to him. He moved forwards and to the right, in the direction he had last seen the two priests running towards.

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Father Philip Callahan's first waking image was seeing the wide, dead, eyes of his friend and fellow priest, Father Joseph Hale. Ignoring his own body's injuries, Philip sat up and felt for a pulse. In doing so, he found the cause of the man's death -his neck was broken. Closing his eyes, Philip began saying a prayer.

He was interrupted by Nick Boyle's hoarse voice calling his name.

"NICK!? I'M OVER HERE!" Philip screamed, not moving away from Joseph's body. In his grief, Philip was hardly aware of anything, including the fact that the church was burning all around them. Tears flowed freely from his eyes, though he wasn't sure of it was smoke or sadness.

"CHRIST PHILIP!" Nick yelled, much closer now.

Philip turned, about to scold Nick for blasphemy in a church, when he caught the expression on the young man's face. A mix of surprise, anger, and pain. Philip was sure his mirrored Nick's.

"He's dead." Philip said as Nick closed the distance between them.

"Phil, we hafta get outa here." He said gently, aware that he sounded insensitive, but at the same time, not wanting to die in the fire.

"I'm not leaving him." Philip said, pulling himself to his feet and then picking the dead priest's body up as well.

"Fine. Let's just move."

Philip nodded and headed out the side door that him and Joseph had been so close to when the bomb had detonated.

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Once out side again in the cool air, Nick's eyes found the lights of the fire trucks and ambulances. He hurried towards them, leaving Philip behind. He wanted the firemen to know that there wasn't any one else inside the building before they searched.

"Anyone inside?" One of the firemen asked as he approached. The man looked like he was the leader of them all. The others were running around, preparing the hoses.

"Everyone's out." Nick answered, his throat sore.

"Good..." The man mumbled, then headed towards the other firemen that looked like they were preparing to go inside.

"Sir?" Someone just to his right asked. Nick spun and came fast to face with a short young woman in a blue uniform. "Would you like to come over to the ambulances?"

Nick nodded and looked back to the grass in front of the church, seeing Philip gently laying Joseph on the ground as a pair of paramedics tried to talk to him. He was pretty sure that Philip wasn't even aware of their presence. Philip's lips were moving quickly, in a silent prayer. Nick averted his eyes, aware of the Priest's pain.

"Where's Julia?" Nick asked the woman that was leading towards the ambulance.

"Julia?"

"The woman that was on the grass." Nick said, his heart starting to move a little faster. He knew it even before the woman said it.

"There was no one outside when we got here. We were the first on arrival." As she talked, she opened the back doors to the ambulance they had arrived at. "Sit." She said, Nick didn't.

"She was out here!" He insisted.

"No, sir, she wasn't. I was the first here...Do you think she went for help?"

"She couldn't walk." The building feeling of dread exploded then, and Nick ran towards Philip, who was now also being lead over to the ambulance. The paramedic called after him, but he barely heard her. It was dim...

"Nick, what's wrong?" Philip asked, concerned by the expression on the ex-SEAL's face. It was the first real display of emotion Philip has seen.

"Julia's gone!" Nick nearly screamed, close to sounding hysterical.

As he looked at Philip, everything seemed to grow dim. In all his life, Nick had never given into panic, it would've gotten him killed while he was in the military. Now, however, he could feel his chest tightening even more than it was already, his breath freezing in his lungs.

Philip reached out and hand and put it on his shoulder. Somehow, the gesture did the trick. He could breathe again, though he knew it was way too fast. She was hurt, and now someone had her...

"We'll find her, Nick..." Philip assured. "We have to get a hold of Derek."

Philip telling him what had to be done was what really helped him get himself under control. He had spent the past four years of his life being told what to do and when to do it. Knowing there was some kind of protocol for a situation like this helped get him back to himself.

Philip looked into Nick's eyes and was glad to see that the panic that had crept into them had disappeared almost completely. Silently, the two walked back to the ambulances, worried about their friend and coworker, but not hysterical.

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Derek Rayne could feel the tension and frustration radiating out of the young man next to them as he silently drove up the long driveway to the house. Derek had been shocked when he had received the phone call from Philip, telling him what had happened and that Julia was missing.

"Nick, calm down, we'll find her." Derek said for the umpteenth time as he slowed to a stop outside the house.

"When!?" Nick shot back, his anger taking over. "When she's dead? Derek, she was hurt. I'm sure whoever the hell has her isn't taking her to a doctor..." Nick trailed off, knowing that mouthing off to his boss probably wasn't the best of ideas. He opened the door and got out of the four by four, ignoring the small protest his ribs gave him.

"However took her took her for a reason. I want to know why the church was bombed. You and Philip are going to relax while me and Alex do some more research."

Nick almost laughed at the idea of relaxing, but thought better of it. They were halfway to the door when Alex came running out, running towards them. She hugged Philip first who had been silent the entire way home. She turned and wrapped Nick in a hug, taking him by surprise. He gasped when her arms contacted with his sore ribs. She let go like he had burned her and took a step back.

"Sorry...I'm just glad to see the two of you are all right." Alex said, smiling apologetically.

"I'm okay." Nick assured, though he wasn't entirely sure himself. They all entered the house together.

"Alex, look into those other bombings that happened at churches in the city. I'm not sure if this one is connected, but lets start there." Derek said the second the door was closed behind them. "Nick and Philip, sit down somewhere and stay there."

"Derek, more hands would help the research along." Philip tried, speaking Nick's silent protests.

"Philip, the two of you have had enough fun for today." Derek started in a tone that told the two men not to disagree anymore. "You've lost a close friend, Philip."

That was enough, Philip didn't argue any further.

>~~~
"Would you please sit down?" Philip asked, nearly begging the exSEAL.

Nick paused in his pacing long enough to glare at the priest.

"You were injured a whole lot worse then I was and I'm beat."

Nick mumbled something that sounded like 'used to it' to Philip.

"Concussion, two broken ribs..." Philip rattled off, annoyed now.

Standing, he blocked Nick's path. For a second, Philip was sure that Nick was going to slug him. He could see Nick hands clench into fists, but he stood his ground. Instead, he just met the priest with silence.

"I want to help Julia too, but you're just making things worse if you're worn out when you might be needed later on."

"I left her alone." Nick said, looking away from the priest's eyes.

"So this is all your fault?" Philip's voice was surprised.

"More mine than yours." Nick said, almost surprising himself. Showing your emotions in a crisis situation was against all his training, but he was worried, and he was feeling guilty.

Philip moved away and sat on the couch. "I was the one that asked Derek for help with this."

Sighing, Nick dropped himself onto the couch next to Philip. For a long time there was silence, the two of them lost in their own thoughts.

"If you hadn't come along with Julia, Nick, we would've all been killed by the blast...Julia, me, and the biker would be dead along with Father Joseph." Philip said, voicing his thoughts.

Nick jumped to his feet, startling Philip. "The biker!" He said, his voice rising. "He was there when I went to go back in to get you. And he was gone when the firemen showed up."

Philip stood too, understanding what Nick was saying. They had either the man that
>took her, or a witness. Philip realized he was smiling, but then his face fell. "How will we find him?" <p>

Nick smiled for the first time. "His jacket." All he got was a blank stare from Philip. "It had the name of a bar on the back. 'Weird Beard's Bar'."

Philip smiled again. "Lets find Derek." He started to head out of the room when Nick grabbed his arm.

"Is Derek gonna let us do anything?" He asked.

Philip blinked. "No...probably not." Looking into Nick's eyes, Philip saw what he intended to do. "No. Absolutely not. I'm not letting you risk your life and not have Derek
>know where to find you." <p>

"Phil, it's probably biker bar. Can you see Derek in one? I'll only go in and out, I promise. I just wanna find the guy, and ask him a couple questions. I don't think he's responsible for the bomb. Why would he have been sitting in the church if he was?" Nick's words were rushed, like he knew that the priest wouldn't listen for long.

"No. I won't let you go alone."

"Fine, then come with me, but I'm going." Nick was already moving towards the stairs.

Philip jogged to catch up with him. He didn't want to do this, he really didn't. "I'll come."

Nick stopped and turned. "Have you ever fired a gun?"

Philip blinked, obviously thrown off by the question. "If we need guns with us, I-"

"-it's just a precaution, Phil."

Philip shrugged. "Never tired to before."

"It's easy. Aim and pull the trigger." Nick turned and started up the stairs again, Philip close behind.

He really didn't like how things were going...

>~~~
"Nice place." Philip mumbled, eyes on the door of the small bar. The traffic going in and out of the place was amazing. Philip wasn't sure how all those people could fit in one bar.

"Yeah, well our only link to Julia is in there."

"How are you so sure?"

"Because if he's not, we're screwed."

Sighing, Philip tried to figure a way out of this situation. He didn't like the idea of going in there, but he didn't want Nick to go alone. He hadn't seen how the exSEAL acted when he was angry, and he wanted to be there to make sure that Nick didn't do anything stupid. He was also aware of how guilty Nick felt, and knew that the guilt might also cause him to act irrationally. And of course, there was also Philip's own guilt. He wanted to help.

"Do you wanna call Derek and tell him where we are now?" Nick asked, surprising Philip.

"What?"

"By the time he gets here, everything will be over. And that way, incase something bad does happen, he knows where we last were."

"Oh, but I get to make the call..." Philip joked, pulling out his cell phone. The thing was bulky, but it worked. Dialing the number from memory, Philip waited, holding his breath. Derek was gonna kill the two of them.

"This better be you, Philip." Derek Rayne said into the phone.

"Yeah, it is."

"Where are you? Is Nick there too?"

"Yeah, we're together..." Philip trailed off.

"Where are you?" Derek repeated. Philip could hear both anger and concern in his voice.

"Outside a bar." Philip mumbled, looking over to Nick who was watching him.

"The two of you are drinking!?" Derek asked, surprise in his voice

now.

Philip laughed uneasily. "No, not really...The man that ran from the church during the bombing, was outside when Nick went back in to go find me. He was gone when the fire department showed up."

"Philip, does any of this have a point?" Derek asked, his voice turning back to annoyed. Philip was a little taken back by the rudeness, something that never came from the precept. They must've really angered him.

"He was wearing a jacket that said Weird Beard's Bar."

"That's where you two are?"

"Yes."

"Get back to the house." Derek shot, before Philip could get another word in.

"Derek, we're here, we mine as well go in...He's our chance to find Julia."

"Let me talk to Nick."

Philip handed the phone to Nick who looked unhappy to get it. "Yeah?" He asked, knowing that he was in deep trouble for his little excursion.

"Nick, you and Philip are reporting back to the house immediately." Anger was prominent in Derek's voice.

"I'm going inside, Derek. I just want a little information for the guy. He's not
>responsible for the bombing. I wanna know if he saw anything."
<p>

"You go in there and--"

"Derek, you're breaking up." Nick interrupted. "We're gonna go in. I'll call you when we're--" Nick disconnected the line, feeling only mildly guilty about lying to Derek.
>~~~
Alex watched as Derek slammed the phone down angrily. "He's gonna get the both of them killed." Derek mumbled, not sure if he was angry or worried about the two.

"What's going on?"

"They're at a bar, where they think they'll find a witness to what happened to Julia.
>It's not worth losing the two of them too." <p>

"Do you think it was Nick's idea?"

"Philip never pulled a stunt like that...I knew Nick was going to give us trouble. He's so like his father that it scares me...Act first, and then pick up the pieces. That's what might've killed Robert, I'm not going to let Nick get himself killed too."

Alex just shrugged. "He's trained, at least." She tried, wanting to

ease Derek's fears, even if her own were there.

"I'm not sure Nick is aware that sometimes a gun and a fist doesn't make the situation better." Derek sighed, then stood. "Let's see if we can find this bar."

>~~~
"You hung up on him?" Philip asked, surprised again by the exSEAL.

"Yeah, he wanted us to come back. We can't...Come on, let's go." Nick started towards the entrance to the bar, Philip close behind.

The bar was just as small on the inside as it was on the outside. The actual bar ran the length of the right side wall, the other was lined with small tables that were completely full of people that Philip was not used to dealing with. Down the center was three pool tables, all in use. The whole place smelt like leather and alcohol, making Philip's nose burn. Over the shouted conversations, the room was filled with loud music that Philip couldn't recognize. A few people looked up at them when they entered, disgust on their faces. Philip realized then that they were outsiders.

Nick scanned the room looking for the man he had seen at the church. Finally, he saw him, behind the bar, pouring drinks. That explained the jacket. Grabbing Philip by the arm, he went to the bar, sitting in the far corner. Philip sat down, trying to keep his eyes from wandering around, not wanting to upset anyone. Nick tapped his shoulder and leaned in close.

"Keep your head up, Phil. You look scared." Nick said, quiet enough so that Philip was the only one to hear. "Just don't make eye contact...And let me talk to the guy, okay?"

Philip nodded, still obviously uncomfortable. Nick was starting to think he should've come alone, when the bar tender came over to them. The man stopped about three feet away, his eyes going wide. Nick realized how banged up the two of them looked, but knew that it was recognition that made the man back up. After a pause, the man came to them.

"What can I get ya?" He asked, trying to play it cool. Nick could tell by looking into the man's eyes he was scared.

"Two beers," Nick answered, ignoring the look from Philip. "Why'd you leave the church?" He said before the man could turn around.

The man didn't answer, but stayed where he was.

"What happened to the woman I carried out?"

Again no answer. "Look, she was hurt, her leg was broken. I know she didn't walk away. Who took her?"

The other bar tender looked over at them, eyes sizing him up. Nick cursed under his breath, knowing that they had very little time left before they were screwed.

"An ambulance showed up." The bartender said. "They loaded her on, even though she didn't want to go. She kept yelling names, but the guys didn't listen to her...One of them looked at me, and..." The bartender trailed off, as the other one came closer.

"Come on, Barry. There's other customers." The other one said. "Get these two what they want and help me out here."

Barry nodded, moving away from them and grabbing their beers and handing it to them. "I get off in three hours, if you wanna wait around."

Nick nodded. "Okay...I'd like a discrip-" His voice was cut off by the sounds of gun shots.

Barry was struck several times by the bullets that seemed to be aimed at him. Nick reacted quickly, grabbing Philip's arm and pulling him down to the floor with him. Nick hit the floor with his injured side and couldn't stop the groan that escaped his mouth. Gun shots hit the bar where the two of them had been sitting.

Tugging at Philip's arm, Nick scrambled for cover behind an overturned table. Philip made it with him, as bullets kept just missing where they had been.

"You hit, Phil?" Nick asked, pulling his gun out from where it had been tucked into the small of his back. The entire bar was in chaos, someone screaming that they had been shot.

Philip shook his head, his eyes looking a little dazed to Nick. The gunfire had stopped for the moment. Nick held his breath, wondering if the shooter had left, or if they were just waiting. He shifted into a crouch, the gun held tightly in both hands and poked his head above the table. He caught sight of the man with the gun for a second before he dropped back down, bullets hitting the wall behind him.

"it's just a precaution, Phil." Philip mocked softly, pulling out his own gun, looking at it doubtfully.

Again, Nick shifted into a crouch, ready to fire. When he rose this time, he was ready to fire. But the man with the gun was gone. Cursing, Nick stood, ignoring Philip's protests. The bar had become eerily silent.

"It's o-" Nick started when the shots were fired again. Nick dropped back down, a bullet just missing his right shoulder. Ignoring once again the stabs of pain from his ribs, Nick pulled himself into a crouch again. He quickly realized the bullets had come from in front of him, but more towards the right. He was trying to get around them.

"Go for the door, Phil." Nick whispered. "Keep your head down, I'll cover ya."

"I'm not leaving you here." Philip said.

"Don't worry, I'll follow ya out...On three, okay?" Philip nodded.

"One...two...three...go!" He shouted the last part, standing and firing at the man he could once again see. The man had turned towards Philip, who was moving as fast as he could to the doors.

Nick squeezed the trigger three times, one of the shots hitting the man in the left leg. The man's last shot was directed at him, but went high as the man fell back. Not wanting the man to get another shot out at Philip, Nick came forwards, leaving the relative safety of the table and heading towards the fallen man. Out of the corner of his eyes, Nick saw Philip get out of the door.

That was when the bullet hit him.

>~~~
Philip reached the door and spun, watching to see if Nick was all right. He realized that he wasn't. While Nick had his attention focused on the man that had been shooting at them, another man had come out of the men's room, behind Nick, gun in hand. The man had squeezed off a shot at Nick before Philip could scream his warning.

Watching with growing horror, Philip followed Nick's fall with his eyes, seeing him hit his head on a table before hitting the ground. A list of possible places he had been shoot, all fatal, ran through Philip's head as the man laying against the back wall rose. He fired once at the man that had shot Nick, who also fired at him. Within seconds, both men were also on the ground.

Saying a litany of curses no priest should ever say, Philip ran to his fallen coworker. He dropped to his knees, first checking for a pulse, glad to find one, a strong one too. Nick was laying on his face, blood pouring from the wound in his right shoulder. He was unconscious, which at first worried Philip until he remembered that Nick had hit his head. The sounds of sirens was music to Philip's ears. The ringing of his cell phone, however, wasn't.

He tried to ignore it, to concentrate on doing whatever little first aid he could think of. He pulled off his jacket, ignoring the cell phone as it fell out of his pocket and struck the floor. Using his jacket as a makeshift bandage, he tried to keep pressure on both sides of the wound. He wound up with the exSEAL partially in his lap, his hands on either side of Nick's shoulder.

The ringing of his cell was the only sound in the room, sounding shrill in the silence. After about a dozen rings, it stopped. Slowly, the silence around them broke, all at once, people started moving again. People leaving the bar at a run, some sitting in stunned silence still, others moving to help the injured. Someone kneeled next to Philip, putting a hand on his shoulder.

Philip looked at the big, broad man, who was kneeling besides him. The man was decked out in the usual leather, with lots of chains on his jacket. He looked like the kind of guy that could snap Philip in half and not break a sweat. But looking into the man's eyes, Philip knew he had nothing to worry about.

"Your friend, okay?" The man asked.

"He was shot." Philip answered, knowing it was a stupid reply, but said it anyway. How okay could Nick be if he had a bullet just tear through him?

"Where?"

"His shoulder."

The man nodded, as Philip's phone started ringing again. The man picked the phone up and held it up to Philip.

"You wanna answer it?"

Knowing who it was, and knowing that he couldn't avoid the conversation, he nodded. The man hit the right button and handed it over to Philip, who trapped the phone between his ear and shoulder, so he didn't have to take his hands away from Nick.

"Hello?" His voice sounded incredibly shaken.

"Philip!" It was Alex. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah."

"What about Nick?"

The sounds of the sirens were much louder now, they had to be a block away the most. Philip didn't answer, not knowing how to say it.

"Philip, is that sirens in the background?"

He had hoped she couldn't hear them. "Um, we had a bit of a problem..." He trailed off.

"Philip, is Nick all right?"

"No."

"No?"

"No. He was shot."

"WHAT!?" Derek's voice now, surprised and concerned. And angry. They must've had him on speaker phone.

"Someone shot him in the back...I think he's gonna be okay."

As if to prove that point, Nick groaned. Philip looked down, a little surprised to see the exSEAL's eyes halfway open. Without thinking about it, Philip disconnected the phone. He put it down beside him, keeping his eyes glued on Nick's.

"Nick?" He asked, his voice now holding concern.

The only response he received was a groan. Then, without warning, Nick's eyes slipped shut again. Philip was reassured by the steady rise and fall of Nick's chest.

"He'll be okay." The biker said, patting Philip's shoulder again.

Any reply Philip could've given was cut off when the paramedics entered the bar.

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"The bullet went straight through..."

That was the first voice Nick was aware of as he started to wake up. The second was Derek's hushed voice. He couldn't make out what he was

saying. He kept his eyes closed, not wanting to face Derek's wrath just yet. He listened as the door shut as someone left the room. He tried to figure out what exactly had happened. He had been shot in the back. Which would explain why he was laying on his side.

With a slight groan, which was more out of fear of what he was going to be told than pain, he opened his eyes. Philip was looking down at him, worry in his eyes, but also there was a warning of what was to come. He was in a lot of trouble, and he knew it.

"Nick?" Derek asked, his voice soft from behind him.

Sighing, Nick tried to sit up. Derek's strong hand gently pushed him back down to the bed. Decided that he was beat, Nick stayed there.

"As long as your well enough to sit up, you can tell me what the hell happened." Derek said, coming around the bed and sitting in one of the plastic chairs. "And more importantly, what you were thinking."

Nick closed his eyes for a second. "Derek, I had no idea that there was going to be a gun fight." He said.

"Then why did you make Philip take a gun as well as yourself?"

"Always be prepared. If we didn't have 'em, we would've both been killed."

"Ah, instead of you nearly getting killed."

"I've been shot before...this is nothing." Nick tried, he realized two seconds too late that it was the wrong thing to say.

"You are going to get yourself killed. If you have a death wish don't use The Legacy to do it. And if you insist on doing it, please don't drag anyone else down with you. " Derek said, standing.

Nick could see how mad the older man was. He was lucky if he was still a member of The Legacy when he got out of the hospital. Without saying another word, Derek left, leaving him alone with Philip.

"The man that shoot you was a cop." Philip said after a long silence. "He was shot by the other man, he's alive, but in critical condition. The other man is dead. So is the bartender." Philip supplied all the information, he knew Nick wanted to know.

"Christ..." Nick blushed slightly at the blasphemy in front of a priest, then continued.
>"Aren't cops supposed to identify themselves before they shoot at people?" <p>

"Apparently this guy didn't think so." Philip paused. "Derek's beyond mad for this one, Nick. He said he's considering kicking you out of the Legacy...Two times in the hospital during your first three days with us..."

"First time was not my fault...This was...What about Julia? Have they

found out anything about the ambulance?" Nick asked, changing the subject. He didn't want to think what would happen if he was kicked out of the Legacy. He'd have no where to go...

"Alex is at the house checking it out. I'm not sure that it's going to lead anywhere."

Nick nodded. "What about the shooter? They I.D. him?"

Philip nodded. "His name's Brandon Richards. He was only seventeen years old, Nick...He ran away from an abuse family when he was thirteen..."

Something clicked in Nick's head. "Do you think it could've been some kind of cult that bombed the churches? Richards fits with the type of person that would join a cult."

"Why would they have taken Julia?" Philip asked, agreeing with Nick's thoughts.

"Maybe they knew about the Legacy."

Philip stood. "I'm gonna go talk to Derek about this. You get some rest. They want to keep you here over night, at least."

Nick nodded, though he doubted he was going to get any sleep.
>~~~
Bright light that hurt his eyes. With a groan, Nick opened his eyes as the door to his room opened. A young man wearing hospital scrubs came in, pushing a wheel chair. The man snapped on the light, smiling apologetically.

"Sorry sir, but we're gonna hafta move you down to a different room. Somebody goofed -this room is scheduled for repairs."

Nick blinked and looked for a clock, they had took his watch when he entered the hospital. In the dim light, he couldn't make out the clock that was against the wall. He did know that it was late, and that most hospitals didn't move around patients during the middle of the night.

Nick sat up and locked eyes with the young man, letting him know it wasn't going to be that easy without words. The man reached into his pocket, pulling out a syringe. He smiled.

"I was told you wouldn't make this easy." The man said, abandoning the wheel chair and moving forwards.

Nick leapt to his feet, a little unsteady. He cursed his body as he tensed, ready to fight. The young man lunged at him, and Nick blocked his swing, with his left arm, wrenching out the IV as he did so. The younger man took another swing, knowing where to attack, hitting Nick hard in his injured ribs. Nick gasped, but took a swing at the man, hitting him in the nose, knocking him backwards.

"You bastard!" The guy hissed through his cupped hands. "Nichols!" He called through the half open door. Another man came in, this time older and bigger.

Nick cursed to himself, he knew his odds were low. His right arm was in a sling, and the slightest movements caused pain to rip through

the damaged muscles. On top of that, his head was still screwed up, and there was at least some pain medication in him that did make everything hurt a hell of a lot less, but at the moment was making his mind a little sluggish. His body wasn't responding as quick as it should either. He was screwed.

Nichols charged at him, fists raised. At the last second, Nick managed to get himself mostly out of the way. Instead of hitting him head on, Nichols caught one of his arms around his waist, and threw Nick to the ground. Nick let out a small yelp as his injured shoulder made contact with the tiled floor.

For a second, he laid there, blinded with pain. Nichols had fallen on top of him, and was trying to pin him down. Nick struggled, ripping the stitches in his shoulder as he did so. Seeing that fighting wasn't helping the situation at the moment, he stopped and glared into the eyes of the man on top of him.

"The little fucker broke my nose!" The first man said, coming closer and kicking Nick in his injured side.

Absently, Nick wondered why no one heard the struggle, as the first man moved closer, bending down. Nick tried to avoid the needle, but he had no where to go with Nichols on top of him. Hell, he couldn't even breathe with the man on top of him.

Then everything went black.

>~~~
"He's gone!" Derek said, standing, slamming his hands on the table.

"What?" Philip asked.

"Nick! He left the hospital some time last night!"

"Are you sure he left on his own free will?" Alex asked, concern in her eyes.

"There were no signs of struggle...I wouldn't put it past him to do it."

"He was just shot!" Alex said, anger seeping into her own voice.

"Derek, I don't think he would've left. After you went out of the room yesterday, he looked like he had a bit of a revelation...I don't think he would've done it, especially after how you reacted." Philip said, his voice was all concern, not anger like the other two in the room.

"He left once without letting anyone know where he was going."

"I was with him then. And he called you before we went in. Nick knew that he would need you to be able to find us. He didn't go on his own free will." Philip insisted, almost annoyed by them. But he could understand. It just made him angry that Derek wouldn't believe his point of view.

Derek sighed, and sat back down. Nick Boyle was going to give him a lot of gray hair. "I'm afraid to concentrate on looking for Nick, when he may have run away. Julia's still out there."

"My guess is that whoever took Nick also has Julia." Philip shot back, standing. "He didn't leave, Derek. He would've called you."

Without waiting for a reply, Philip left the room.

>~~~
Julia tensed as the door opened. For a moment, no one entered. Then, one of the last people she had expected to see came flying in. Nick Boyle was thrown into the room, barely conscious. He laid where he fell, and groaned, his eyes clenched shut.

"Nick?" Julia asked after the door had shut, leaving them in the dim half-light coming from the single bare bulb in the room. The thought of getting up and putting any kind of weight on her leg didn't seem appealing, but she started to rise anyway.

"Stay there...I'll get up." Nick mumbled, after turning to face her. Julia didn't like how his voice sounded, not really weak, but not all there at the same time.

Using his left arm for support, he got himself to his knees. For a long time he stayed there, his neck bent, looking down at the cold cement under him. He waited for his head to stop swimming, but quickly realized that it wouldn't. The best he was getting was an only slightly dizzy feeling every time he moved.

"My god! You're bleeding." Julia said, about to rise again.

"Yeah...it's a long story." Nick said, his voice only slightly clearer. Deciding that standing would take more energy than he had to give, he crawled over to her.

He pushed himself into a sitting position, keeping his back off the wall, leaning slightly forwards. The two just stared at each other, trying to size up the other's injuries. Nick was glad to see that she didn't have any ones that weren't there after the blast.

>At least they were being nice to her. <p>

"What the hell happened to you?" Julia asked, knowing that Nick wasn't injured this bad after the bomb.

"I got shot." Nick said, simply, looking away from her.

"Jesus Christ. When? What happened?"

Taking a deep breath, Nick told her everything that had happened after they found out she was gone. Including Derek's anger at him for endangering his and Philip's lives.

"So, he probably thinks I left the hospital on my own." Nick finished, looking sheepish.

"Well, as long as they're looking for me, they'll find you." She offered, not knowing what else to say.

"The question is, will they find us...I was kinda out of it for most of the trip here, nice little drugs they got...But I got the impression I was on a boat for a while."

She nodded. "I had the same feeling...They haven't come in here since they put me in here. I have no idea what these people want."

"Do you think they know about the Legacy?" Nick asked, his voice dropped just a little.

She shrugged. "If they know the rings, then it's a possibility...Do you think that's why they have us here?"

He gave a half shrug, his right shoulder not moving. For a long time he was silent, trying to assess their situation. His head was aching and making him a little dizzy still, his right arm, the arm he was the strongest with, was useless, and his ribs were screaming at him. Julia's only major injury appeared to be her leg, but that was the most damning at the moment. If he thought she could make a run for it, he would try to get the door open, and see where things went from there.

"Out of curiosity, what is the Legacy's policy on hostage situations?" He asked, knowing the answer.

"No dealing."

He closed his eyes. "That's what I thought."

They were screwed.

>~~~
When the door opened, Nick got his feet, his body tight, set for a fight. Two men walked in, both armed with hand guns. He relaxed, not even wanting to think about fighting for the weapons. Nick recognized one of them as Nichols, who had the gun pointed at his head. The other man, the one who's nose he had broken, had his weapon aimed down at Julia.

"Miss Ravenport requests your company." The one with a broken nose said, smiling.

Julia fought to get to her feet, keeping all her weight on her uninjured leg. Nick reached out to steady her, grabbing her right upper arm. The one that spoke went out the door, Nichols staying behind. Understanding what they were doing, Nick lead Julia out, wrapping his left arm around her waist, and reaching up his right hand to support her arm that was draped around his shoulders. He ignored his own pain from moving his arm. Keeping his eyes down -it was too painful to look at Julia's face as they walked, he followed the man.

Without warning, Nichols hit him hard in the back with the butt of his gun. Nick wasn't sure if the man had intended on hitting him in his now reopened bullet wound or not, and didn't really care. For a second, he was blinded by the pain.

"Walk faster." Nichols said.

"She's got a broken leg you bastard." Nick said through clenched teeth. He tensed, waiting for further retaliation, but received none. They kept walking in silence.

From what he saw of the building they were in, Nick knew that making a run for it wasn't an option. The halls were dimly lit, not to mention winding. If Julia's leg wasn't hurt, he would've had no

problems running, attempting to loose those chasing him. He was sure he could, but if he and Julia were to escape, he'd need a direct path out of the building. The less walking the better.

His thoughts were cut off as they entered a room. The room was large, and just as dimly lit as the rest of the building. The air inside was warm, a lot hotter then the almost cold outside the room. Once his eyes adjusted to the dimmer light, Nick was able to see that they were no longer alone.

The room resembled an auditorium, the rows of seats filled except for the last two. All Nick could see was the backs of heads, all of which were uniformly cut short. Some of the people in the seats were female, he saw this as he and Julia were lead up the main row. No one turned to look at him, instead, they stared strait ahead, towards the stage that had the curtains drawn. With something close to dread in his stomach, Nick realized he didn't want to see what was behind them.

>~~~
Amanda Ravenport smiled, not needing to move the curtains to know what was going on outside them. All of her followers were out there, the short hair and blank faces. Being lead to her like lambs to the slaughter were two members of the San Francisco Legacy house, the one she had been apart of all those years ago, before she saw the light. She would try to help these two see the light as well, before using them to get what she needed.

>~~~
They reached the front of the rows. Without a warning, Nichols hit him hard in the back again, knocking the two of them to the floor in a pile.

"On your knees!" Nichols spat, putting his gun against the back of Nick's head.

Tense, Nick did so slowly, watching, concerned as Julia did as well. He didn't like how much she was sweating. Her eyes were bright and pain filled. It made Nick want to hurt whoever was responsible for this.

As if to tempt him, a woman came out of the curtains, dressed plainly in a black

>sweater and jeans. Nick was struck by her beauty, even though he hated her. Her blond hair framed her prefect face. The woman's eyes were off though, too old looking to belong to her. <p>

"Ah, my guests have arrived!" She said, smiling. Nick didn't like her smile.

>Moving fluidly, she descended the stairs to Nick's left and moved to stand in front of them. <p>

"You two are Legacy." She said, simply, smiling still.

Both Nick and Julia were silent, neither confirming nor denying that they were Legacy. She bent, grabbing Nick by the throat, and pulled him to his feet. He wasn't intimidated to see that the woman had about four inches on him. He thought that might've been part of her reason for making him stand -until she put her hand to the bullet wound.

"I only wanted you, your priest friend could've died for all I cared." She said, her hand warm against the aching wound.

"Killing one priest wasn't enough?" Nick asked before he could stop himself.

Suddenly, the hand that had been warm was causing pain, but she wasn't moving her hand at all. Instead, it just felt like she was doing it her self, hurting him without trying. Nick tensed, trying hard not to let her be aware of the pain she was causing him. Still, the sweat had broken out all over his body, and his eyes were almost closed. All at once, she stopped. He gave up the struggle between him and his legs and let himself fall to the ground.

"I suggest you watch your self around me." She warned. She waited while he caught his breath. "Good. I trust we can continue with more self control now?" She waited for him to nod, which he did reluctantly. Nick was aware of when he was beat.

"Good, good. I need you to make a phone call for me. Either of you volunteering?"

"I'll do it." Nick offered. In the very least Derek would know he wasn't off on his own but really in trouble.

"Good. It's so easy to motivate people with a little pain, don't ya think, Mr. Boyle?"

Nick didn't say anything, just glared up at the woman.

She smiled. "Learned already. I just need you to say a few words to Derek, so he knows I'm not fooling him. Okay?"

Again, Nick nodded, wondering how much he could blurt out before they stopped him.

"Good." From seemingly out of nowhere, she produced a cell phone, and dialed a number Nick didn't even really know himself too well. She pulled him to his feet again, purposely pulling from under his right shoulder, sending pain through his shoulder.

She pressed the phone to his ear, her other hand moving to lay against his wound again in a silent warning. Nick waited while the phone rang. On the sixth, someone picked up.

"Good afternoon, Luna Foundation." An unfamiliar voice chirped. It took Nick a second to guess that it was probably a servant answering.

"Hey, can I talk to Derek? It's Nick Boyle." He said, his eyes locked on the woman's. She smiled.

There was a few moments of silence, then Derek's rushed and angry voice practically yelling into the phone. "Nick? Where are you, what th-

"Derek? I..." He paused, and made a quick decision. "Don't do what she sa-" He started, but cut off abruptly as more pain blossomed in his shoulder. She didn't stop until he groaned, holding him up when he started to fall.

She yanked the phone away from his ear, smiling once again. "Derek! It's been so long!" She cried into the phone, mock cheeriness in her

voice.

"Who is this? What are you doing with Nick? Do you have Julia?" Derek asked, not recognizing the voice.

"Forgot me that quickly, Derek?" She teased. "I just showed Nick that you should follow instructions, and yes, Julia is here with us."

"Who are you!?" Derek demanded.

"Amanda...You didn't seem to like me, but I didn't know you hated me this much, Derek."

"Amanda Ravenport!?" Derek asked, surprise in his voice.

"The one and only."

"What are you doing with them?"

"Showing them the light, and using them to get something out of the Legacy." Amanda answered, matter of factly.

"You know the Legacy doesn't deal wi-" Derek started.

Amanda smiled as she again attacked the exSEAL still standing in front of her. He groaned, loud enough for Derek to hear. She almost felt guilty for it. But she needed it...Death was not an option.

"I suggest you make the effort to change the rules in this one Derek. I could hurt them a lot worse then they already are."

There was a long pause, and Amanda knew that Derek was thinking. Finally, the four best words she could've heard from him. "What do you want?"

>~~~
Again, Alex and Philip watched Derek, knowing who had been on the phone. The amount of anger and concern on Derek's face scared Alex. Silence followed after Derek hung up the phone.

"You were right Philip." Derek said quietly, his eyes on the table, his mind trying to sort everything out.

"Are they all right?" Alex asked, almost afraid of the answer.

Derek shrugged. "They're both obviously hurt, but I'm not sure if she's hurt them more."

"What are we going to do?"

"Give her what she wants...She was Legacy." Derek carefully watched the reactions of the two remaining members of the team. Both looked shocked, and a little angry.

"What does she want?" Philip asked, aware of the potential dangers.

"To live forever." He answered, his voice tired.

>~~~
Nick turned to Julia after Amanda told Derek what she wanted. He hadn't heard of what the woman had asked for, but he hoped

Julia had. From the confused look on her face, he knew she didn't.

His attention snapped back to Amanda as she disconnected the phone, smiling.

>"Klein, take Mrs. Walker back." <p>

Nick started to protest, but something inside him made him keep his mouth shut. If they were taking her back to the room, then she probably wasn't the one in danger. He was.

He watched as the second man took Julia away, not even trying to support her. It made his heart ache to watch her hobble up the isle. His body tensed as he fought the urge to reach out and try to hurt the woman in front of him. It would do nothing but get him hurt worse.

As if sensing his thoughts, Amanda moved a step closer to him, smiling. "You can follow me." She said, her eyes warning him to try anything.

Wordlessly, he did as told, aware that Nichols still followed them, and that the man had a gun. He was lead again through the dark and winding halls. Finally, Amanda stopped walking and stood outside a door. Nick watched as she put in a code to open the door, noting the numbers she pressed. HE didn't think it would help him, but it was always good to have as much information he could get.

She opened the door and waved him inside. He did as told, glad to see that Nichols

>didn't follow. <p>

"Have a seat, Mr. Boyle." She said, waving at a wooden chair in middle of the room.

Again, Nick did as told, sitting down, but leaning forwards, his back off the chair.

"Oh, right...getting shot in the back does create a lot of problems." She said, sitting in the only other chair in the room, facing him. Nick clenched his fists, but said nothing.

>"Do you blame me for that?" <p>

"Well, if your little assassin hadn't been shooting at me, then the cop wouldn't have shot, me would he?" Nick shot back, tired of keeping his mouth shut.

She smiled. "You do have a temper, Mr. Boyle...just like your father."

Nick blinked, taken back by her comment.

"Don't look so surprised. I worked with Dad." She smiled, once again seeing

>confusion on his face. "It's amazing what you can learn through the legacy...I didn't always look this young, Nick. And yes, I did work with your Dad, right up until he died." <p>

"I never heard of you." He said. His father had talked about the Legacy little, but still, Nick knew almost all the members of the San

Francisco house.

She smiled again. "I wasn't his number one fan...The precept tried to keep us apart as much as possible...He hated me because I saw him for the scum he really was." She paused, locking eyes with him. As much as Nick wanted to, he didn't look away. "I guess you did too."

Nick shifted uncomfortably. He had spent the past nine years trying to forget his father, and this woman was intentionally bringing it up. He knew that she knew everything. Hatred burned again, not just for his father but for the woman sitting in front of him.

"I can take all that pain away, Nick." She said, leaning forewords.

He looked up, finally understanding why she brought it up. Her words triggered both disgust and longing. The longing frightened him. He fought against it.

"You were responsible for all those bombings." He forced himself to say, trying to focus on the bad.

"Yes. I needed the Legacy's attention...I hear that it was a ghost that finally did it."

"You're responsible for twelve deaths, and dozens of injuries."

"Sacrifices."

"You hurt my friends."

"I only want to live forever."

He was at a loss for words, trying to sort it all out in his head. For some reason, around the woman, his mind was foggy.

"I can take it away, Nick." She said again, leaning close, one hand brushing against his cheek.

He pushed her hand away, not looking at her. "I don't want it to go away." He said, knowing he wasn't convincing either of them. He couldn't handle this, right after just learning how to deal with it.

"You do."

"Go to hell." He snapped, trying hard to control himself.

"I don't think so...Look, you're tired, you're hurt. Why don't I leave you alone to think it over."

He didn't say anything, just watched her as she left. Once she was gone, he stood, moving around the room, trying to find any ways of escape. He knew he needed to get away from the strange woman. He wasn't sure how long he could trust himself to keep saying no.

>~~~
No windows, no vents, no lose boards...Nothing except the door, and Nick was reluctant to test that one out. If it was the only exit, then they'd be watching it a lot closer. But it was his last

choice.

The door had the same type of key pad on the inside as the outside. He didn't know

>if the code was the same, and was reluctant to try it. It could set off an alarm if he put in the wrong code. He was surprised that she would leave him with the door like that, especially after she knew he watched her put in the code. <p>

He wouldn't gain anything from standing there. Biting his lower lip, Nick put in the code, watching the light turn from red to green. It was too easy. There was probably a man out there, with a gun, ready to usher him back into the room. Again, he wouldn't know if he just stood there.

Holding his breath, Nick reached out and grabbed the door handle. He never expected the jolt of electricity that met him.

>~~~
Amanda smiled as she entered the room, seeing the exSEAL sprawled on the floor, mostly on his back. She hadn't thought the charge was that much. She moved, and crouched next to him, her hand moving to his neck, searching for a pulse.

Without warning, Nick's left arm snaked out and grabbed her wrist, his right flying up and punching her in the nose. It was the first time he had ever hit a woman in his life, but he honestly didn't feel to bad, considering who he was hitting. Amanda backed up, her head going to her face, her old eyes open wide.

Nick got to his feet as quickly as possible, and tried to move past her. She stayed where she was, her dark, hateful eyes locked on him. Before he could realize he was in the air, he was smacking against the wall, hitting it hard enough for his ears to ring. She kept him there, pinned against the wall.

"That was a bad idea, Mr. Boyle." She said, her words muffled by her hands.

Then he was flying through the air, striking the opposite wall and falling to the ground. He lay where he was, completely shocked, trying to figure out if the pain flaring through his body was from old injuries or new ones.

"A very bad idea. I want to help you, but you've shown me that you're gonna be a bit of a problem..." She trailed off, as she once again caused him to take flight across the room. This time, when he hit the ground, he was unconscious.

She definitely had to keep a better eye on him. She needed his full cooperation. She would get it.

>~~~
The pain from his shoulder was amazing, the first thing he was aware of as he pulled out of unconsciousness. The second was that he wasn't touching the ground, he was hanging from his wrists. For a long time he kept his eyes closed, trying to figure out if he was alone or not.

"I know you're awake, Mr. Boyle." She said, making her presence known. "Open your eyes."

Nick did as told, honestly afraid to anger the woman any further. His body hurt more from his little meeting with the walls, but he

couldn't figure out specifically what hurt. His head felt even worse, bad enough for him to know he was going to be in serious trouble if he hit it again.

"Sorry for the rough treatment, but I've underestimated you once, I won't do it twice."

He tried to do his best to scowl at the woman, a tough job when even your face ached.

"I want to help you, Nick." She said, her voice turning softer.

"I don't want your help." He insisted.

"I can make you see the light, help you learn what's important."

"I know what's important."

"No, you really don't...I want to teach you, Nick."

He closed his eyes, wishing he could block her out.

"You have to listen, you'll understand eventually."

"Go to hell." He said through gritted teeth. That seemed to be the only comeback he could think of around her.

"You can save Julia's soul."

He looked up, taken back. "I need her blood for sacrifice...If I take her life, she'll be damned to hell...But if you do it..." She trailed off, knowing she didn't need to finish. A complete and total lie, but it didn't matter. Anything to get him to listen to her. She wanted his trust, his devotion. She knew how to get it, and would.

>~~~
Amanda smiled, waiting for the phone to be answered. She knew Derek would do what she wanted, she just needed confirmation.

"Amanda?" Derek asked, answering the phone.

"Derek. Do you have it?"

A slight hesitation. "Yes, are they all right?"

She smiled again, out of relief. "Yes, they are...but if you want them to stay that way, then I suggest you do what I want...Still at Angel Island, right?"

"Yes."

"Good..." She told him all the instructions, knowing Derek would follow them to the

>letter. He would never endanger the lives of the two Legacy members she had. Too bad he wasn't going to get either of them back...

~~~

>Derek Rayne stood in the foyer of the massive building, sure he was doing the right thing. He'd have to explain what had happened later, though right now getting his team back was more important to him. The London house would want his head for this, he was sure about that. If everything went well, and somehow Amanda didn't use the knife that he

held in his hands, the London house would never have to know.
<p>

"Derek!" Someone called, pulling him from his thoughts.

He turned to see Amanda and a pair of big, heavy men walking towards him. Amanda was smiling. She didn't look a day older.

"Where are they?" Derek demanded.

"Follow us, and I'll show you." Amanda answered, and for the first time, Derek really knew that this wasn't going to go right. It was in the woman's voice -the excitement she held there. In her eyes, something big was going to happen, and Derek was sure that it involved Julia and Nick.

Less than five minutes later, he found out how right he was.
>~~~
Derek was in complete disbelief to see Julia tied to the wooden alter, even more shocked to see Nick standing, alone, his head down. The two looked horrible, like they had been through hell.

Amanda led him to the front of the room, right up to the front row. Then she smiled up at Nick. "Nick, come down here and take Derek's present." She said, the smile still on her face.

Derek watched as Nick moved across the stage and descended the stairs, making a wide circle around Julia. The young man moved slowly, stiffly, his head still down, studying his feet. Derek feared what Amanda had done to him in the time they were together.

Derek held the knife out, dread filling his stomach. Nick just stood there, looking every where but into Derek's eyes.

"Take it, Nick." Amanda urged, knowing the exSEAL needed some push.

Nick reached out and took the cloth wrapped object. Derek noticed how badly Nick was shaking, and wondered if he was aware of it himself. Derek guessed not. He was still shaking as Amanda lead him up the stairs and back onto the stage. Together the two stood behind Julia, Nick now looking up, as if afraid to look at Julia.

Now, for the first time, Nick's eyes locked with his. Seeing the look in the younger man's eyes made most of Derek's fear drop away.

>~~~
"Do it, Nick." Amanda urged, sensing Nick's hesitations. She stood over his right shoulder.

"I.." Nick started, then raised the knife high above his head, using both hands. He was past feeling pain. It was all numb, disconnected. He was shaking, even now his mind stuck in turmoil. Julia looked up at him, her eyes wide and shocked, but there was understanding there as well.

"Do it." She said again, moving even closer behind him.

Nick screamed as he dropped the knife, at the last second moving and stabbing Amanda with it, instead of Julia. Amanda screamed in pain, blood running from the corner of her mouth. She cursed him, screaming

obscenities. She fell back, landing hard on the wooden flooring of the stage. She looked up at Nick, her eyes once again unbelieving.

"You underestimated me twice." Nick said, his voice sounding tired.

He stood there, unaware of anything else going on around him. Not noticing Derek running onto the stage, and untying Julia. Instead, all his attention was focused on Amanda as she tried, in vain, to stay alive. She lost.

>
Once she was dead, there was silence. Derek was tugging at his arm, pulling him back to his surroundings. He looked up in time to see Nichols pulling a switch. Nick had a good idea that it wasn't a good thing. A quick glance down towards the seats told him they had an even bigger problem -her followers were all on their feet, heading towards them.

"Nick?" Julia asked, her voice tight, obviously frightened.

"I think we better get out of here." He said, looking for the best way out. In front of them was the angry mob of followers, behind was Amanda's body-guards, Nichols and Klein. Both men were armed, but making no move to grab their weapons, instead, they were slowly advancing as well. They had a better chance of getting around the two big men than the hundred or so.

Derek, apparently reading his mind, scooped up Julia, and spun, facing the two instead of the crowd. Nick pushed in front of the two, ready to fight the two men, knowing that he didn't really stand a chance. None of them did.

Klein came closer first, swinging at Nick. Nick ducked, punching as he did so, hitting Klein hard in the side. Before the bigger man could react, Nick hit him in the nose, which was still swollen. Taking advantage of Klein's shock, Nick tore the man's weapon from his shoulder holster. He pointed the gun at Klein, who raised his hands.

Nick took a step away from the man before aiming at Nichols, just in time to see that the man had drawn his gun. Nick dropped to the ground and Nichols fired, hearing the bullet as it shot past his head. Not wanting the man to take another shot, Nick aimed and fired, hitting Nichols in the shoulder.

Nick stood, and hurried to where Julia and Derek waited, having slipped past him while he was fighting with the two men. He offered them a small smile.

"Peace of cake." His voice, which sounded hoarse and breathless, betraying him.

Without a reply, Derek turned and went through the door, which, hopefully, lead out of the building.

>~~~
By nothing short of a miracle, they made it out of the building, without further problems. Derek directed them to the boat he had used to get to the small island. They were only a few feet from the shore when the explosion happened.

It rocked the boat, sending all three passengers sprawling to the

floor. At the same time, all of the adrenaline Nick had been moving on, seemed to disappear. He laid where he fell, trying hard to find the strength to at least stand.

He watched as Julia moved to a sitting position, and as Derek stood. He was dimly aware of the two of them calling his name. But again, it all seemed so far away. He could hardly hear them over the ringing in his head. He realized he was going to pass out, and found he didn't really care. It didn't matter if he did, they were all safe. He didn't need to fight anymore. It was over.

When the blackness came, it was almost welcome.

>~~~
For the second time in the short while he had been with the Legacy, Nick Boyle woke up in a hospital. He hoped he was alone when he opened his eyes, but was unsurprised to find he wasn't alone. Derek, who was asleep in one of the cheep plastic chairs, was the only one in the room.

As if knowing he was being watched, Derek opened his eyes.

"How's Julia?" Nick asked, before Derek could say a word. His voice sounding weak and sratchy.

"She's fine. She and Alex are back at the house -doctor's orders." Derek paused, then added "Philip's at Joseph's funeral."

Nick nodded, glad to hear that everyone was alright.

"How are you feeling?" Derek asked.

"I'm okay."

Derek's face went dark for a moment. Obviously the Precept wasn't satisfied with that answer. "You didn't look okay before...when we were on the boat. I couldn't wake you."

Nick closed his eyes. "I'll be fine."

Derek sighed, knowing that was the best answer he was going to get. He was still worried about Nick, as he worried about every member of his team. However, he was sure that Nick Boyle was going to make him either loose his hair or turn it gray.

>~~~
Epilogue:

Mindless chatter filled the room. He wasn't really listening to it, wasn't paying much attention to the screen either. It was just there to fill the void, to push away the silence long enough for him to get his mind to relax. Much to his annoyance, it wouldn't. A million thoughts ran through his mind, preventing him from even thinking about sleep.

Derek had told him everything about Amanda. She was one of the 'gifted' Legacy members, they had taught her how to control her telekinesis. Derek said he wasn't surprised that Amanda had gathered so many people. He knew that her personality, her smile, and her manipulative abilities would've made it easy for her to convince people what she was saying was right. They had never really learned what Amanda considered to be 'the light', and as a result, didn't know what she taught to the members.

Amanda had really hated his father, she wasn't lying about that. Derek confirmed that the Precept had indeed tried to keep the two apart as much as possible. Amanda had left the Legacy after a demon, trying to hurt her, killed her father. Derek hadn't heard from her since, until the phone call.

The cult members, all one hundred and twenty six, all died in the blast. One of them had pulled a switch which started the bomb's timer. Had they been any slower leaving, Nick doubted they would've lived.

As for the ghost that was in Joseph's church, her presence was still unexplained.

"Couldn't sleep, either?"

He jumped at the words, taken off-guard. He looked up to see Julia enter the room, moving easily, even on the crutches. She sat down next to him on the couch, laying the crutches on the floor. For a long time there was silence, then Nick spoke.

"More victims." He said, his voice soft.

"Wha- Oh...the cult members."

He nodded.

"It bothers you, doesn't it?"

"Yeah...They were killed because of a moment of weakness."

"When they let Amanda in?"

He nodded. "I almost did the same." There he admitted it. As far as Derek knew, going along with Amanda long enough to get her in a vulnerable position was his plan. In reality, he had almost, even at the very end, did Amanda's bidding.

"In the end you were strong."

"I should've never shown weakness in the first place. It's practically the first thing I >was thought..." He trailed off, looking away from Julia to stare at the television. <p>

"You put too much pressure on yourself."

"It's the way I was raised...the way I was trained in the Navy."

"That doesn't mean you have to stay that way."

He didn't reply, instead opted to again look at the television.

"Considering all the crap you've been through before this mess, I think you did great."

He turned to look at her, knowing she had no idea how much what she had said affected him. Very few people in his life ever told him he

had done well. Hearing it from the person he had almost killed, but ultimately saved, meant a lot. She understood, she didn't hold anything against him for a moment of weakness.

"And, thanks for trying to find me by going after the guy in the bar...Although, next time, I'd tell Derek where you're going before you leave."

He was aware that she changed the subject, for his benefit, he was sure. "Is Derek
>still angry about that?" <p>

"I think he's forgiven you...And he thinks you learned your lesson."

"Yeah, don't take a priest that's never fired a gun along with you." Nick said his smiling telling her he was joking.

She laughed. Despite everything that happened, he found himself laughing with her.

THE END!

well that's it...i hope you've enjoyed reading it...thanks for getting this far. Please send me feed back (jadecow14@aol.com). I won't improve if you don't tell me what i've done wrong.

End
file.